(iii) For monitoring track geometry and running characteristics of the track, sophisticated track recording cars, oscillograph cars and portable accelerometers are being used progressively.

(iv) For detection of hidden flaws in rails/welds, adequate number of Ultra Sonic Flaw Detectors have been procured. Self Propelled Ultrasonic Rail Testing Cars are being procured.

(v) At the Rail Rolling Mill at Bhilai, online Ultrasonic Flaw Detection (USFD) and eddy current testing is being done to weed out rails with defects, Vacuum degassing is being done to reduce hydrogen content and thus improve quality of rails. Indian Railways and Bhilai Steel Plant of Steel Authority of India Limited are also planning together to produce longer rails *i.e.* 26 metre and 65 or 78 metre, instead of conventional 13 metre length to reduce number of welds in the track.

(vi) Periodical Safety Audit of different divisions by inter-disciplinary teams for Zonal Headquarters is being conducted.

(vii) Security patrolling of track is organized whenever there is threat perception to safety of track from anti-social element.

(viii) Monsoon/winter/hot whether patrolling is organized to watch the vulnerable locations.

National Centre for Plant Genome Research

1900. SHRI K. M. KHAN: Will the Minister of SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have a proposal to set up National Centre for Plant Genome Research;

(b) if so, the time-frame by which the centre would become operational;

(c) whether Government propose to develop lab-to-field linkages between the Centre and the farmers; and

(d) the total amount earmarked and spent?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY IN THE MINISTRY OF SCIENCE AND

TECHNOLOGY (SHRI BACHI SINGH RAWAT): (a) and (b) The National Centre for Plant Genome Research (NCPGR), New Delhi has been set up on 16.07.1998 as a Registered Society under the Societies Registration Act XXI of 1860. The Centre has become operational with many research projects under implementation.

(c) Lab-to-field linkages between the Centre and the farmers have been established specially while doing the field trials of transgenic potato. As and when more technologies and products are ready, the interaction would be further strengthened.

(d) The original cost estimates approved were Rs. 1380 lakhs. By the end of March 2002, a release of Rs. 1282 lakhs has been made.

Creation of separate time zones

1901. PROF. M. SANKARALINGAM: Will the Minister of SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY be pleased to refer to answer to Unstarred Question 302 given in the Rajya Sabha on the 1st March, 2002 and state:

(a) what are the findings of the high-level expert committee set up by the Ministry of Science and Technology, to look into the proposal for creation of two separate time zones for the country;

(b) the decision taken by Government on such findings;

(c) whether Government have solved the problem of North-Eastern States with regard to time, faced by those States;

(d) if so, the details thereof; and

(e) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY IN THE MINISTRY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (SHRI BACHI SINGH RAWAT): (a) to (d) The expert committee constituted under Department of Science and Technology considered various aspects of creating two time zones in the country. The Committee came to the conclusion that having two time zones does not solve the problem effectively. Further, this may cause difficulties due to difference in timings for utilities and services such as Airlines, Railways, Radio, Television and Telephone (STD) services etc. Therefore, the